

June 13, 2007

ARGUS-CHAMPION

County budget disagreements linger

State Rep. Rodeschin walks out, preventing a quorum on motion

By MATTHEW REID
Staff Reporter

NEWPORT — State Rep. Beverly Rodeschin, R-Newport, walked out of a meeting of the Sullivan County delegation earlier this week, criticizing other mem-

bers of the delegation of micro-managing the county's funds.

Rodeschin's frustration came after a motion was made by delegate Ellen Nielsen to direct the county's executive finance committee not to borrow any additional money for

fiscal year 2007 without first being provided with a cash flow statement showing what the county has on hand and expects to receive in revenue compared to what it will have to spend before the end of the fiscal year.

"You're micro-managing the county and micro-managing the treasury, and I'm not going to do that," Rodeschin said as she left the room only a half hour into the three-hour

meeting June 11.

It was the second time in four meetings that Rodeschin has left early. Her absence left the delegation without a quorum, meaning they could not act on Nielsen's motion. The group decided to continue with the meeting solely for informational purposes.

"There's no reason why we shouldn't still all be here,"

SEE COUNTY PAGE A7

COUNTY continued from page A1

Rep. Peter Franklin, D-Newport, and delegation chairman, said near the end of the meeting. "I think we've gotten a lot out of this meeting."

Nielsen's motion also directed the EFC not to approve any additional borrowing of funds for FY08 at the current time.

"We're running up a pretty big deficit and we don't know what's going on," Nielsen said. "This is not the normal situation and it might call for some micro-managing this time."

Rodeschin said the delay in dealing with payroll and other finances would be too great if the delegation passed Nielsen's motion, to which Franklin disagreed.

"There's no bill that comes in to the county that has to be paid that same day," Franklin said. "There is a time period for us to manage our money appropriately. Payroll doesn't come up on us suddenly and we're not flying by the seat of our pants."

Delegation members have expressed concern over the past month that the current year's budget will be exceeded, with Franklin being most outspoken about the way finances within the county have been handled. Rodeschin became so fed up with the discussion during the May 14 meeting that she and County Manager Ed Gil de Rubio walked out of a meeting when Franklin pursued the issue.

Attendance at delegation meetings was another point of contention Monday, just as it had been during previous meetings. The most recent meeting was the third continuance of the original meeting called on May 14 by Franklin for the purpose of asking Gil de Rubio about the status of the county's budget.

Neither Gil de Rubio nor Nursing Home Administrator Scott Wojtkiewicz have been present during the past two times the delegation has gotten togeth-

er.

According to Jeff Graham, the county's certified public accountant who was speaking in the place of the county manager, Gil de Rubio had a meeting at the nursing home that prevented him from appearing before the delegation on Monday.

Graham was forced to miss the June 4 delegation meeting due to personal reasons, but was questioned by Franklin and other delegates for several hours over the budget on May 21.

Rodeschin also questioned if the county treasurer's office needed to be represented at the meetings, but Franklin said it wasn't necessary.

"The treasurer does not oversee the day to day operations of the county funds," Franklin said.

Two county commissioners were present for the meeting, including Ethel Jarvis and Jeff Barrette.

Regarding Nielsen's motion, Barrette said it is hard enough to get people to attend a meeting of the full delegation, let alone a meeting of the executive finance committee on short notice. He did say, however, that he would support the part of the motion directing the EFC to obtain additional information before borrowing extra money, saying the provision is "overdue."

Halfway through the meeting, the delegation relocated from the county probate courtroom to the county commissioners' conference room so they could meet with county bookkeeper Dodi Violette to further discuss the intricacies of the budget.

No representatives from the general public were present at the meeting.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Peter Martin of NCTV said the recording of the meeting would be made available on his Web site, www.exquisite-productions.com, under the Sullivan County meeting section.